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ABSTRACT

This study examined student attitudes toward reading and evaluated the effects of grade level, reading achievement, sex, race, and social status upon reading attitudes. Fifteen classrooms, consisting of 260 fourth and sixth grade students, participated in the study. After individual reading achievement scores were determined for each student, two measures of attitude were administered in one day: the Estes Reading Attitude Scale, measuring attitudes toward reading, and the Diehl Reading Attitude Scale, determining attitudes toward 25 reading-related concepts. Results of the study imply that: girls have a significantly more favorable attitude toward reading than boys; students with above-grade achievement scores show a more positive attitude toward reading and reading-related concepts than students with scores below-grade level; and lower status students and black students convey less positive reading attitudes than white, middle status, and upper status students. (HAI)

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ATTITUDE TOWARD READING AND READING-RELATED CONCEPTS AMONG ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

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The study was designed to measure student attitude toward reading and to determine the effects of grade level, reading achievement, sex, race, and social status upon reading attitudes. The study also investigated student attitude toward 25 reading-related concepts.

Because reading is an academic as well as a recreational factor, it is vital that students develop a positive attitude toward reading. Attitude toward reading may influence reading ability. The student with an unfavorable attitude toward reading has little chance of becoming a mature reader (LaPray, 1972; Koe, 1975).

The importance of the affective domain, particularly in the realm of attitude, is reflected by the inclusion of attitude development in educational objectives. One of the most repeated

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objectives found in reading programs is that students should become lifetime readers who read voluntarily for pleasure and information. To read voluntarily students need a positive attitude toward reading in addition to basic reading skills (Estes, 1971).

The study is significant since it includes independent and dependent variables which have received little or no attention in previous investigations (Alexander and Filler, 1975; Redelheim, 1976). No reported studies combined the two measures of attitude used in this study. Reading attitude was not compared between black and white students in other studies. Most studies of attitude toward reading did not include social status as a variable. This study was unique in its inclusion of the variables of grade level, reading achievement, sex, race, and social status.

Methodology

Design

The independent variables in the study were grade level, reading achievement, sex, race, and social status. There were two levels of grade level: grade four and grade six. The two levels of race were black and white, while the two levels of sex were male and female. Reading achievement had three levels: at, above, or below grade placement. Social status included five levels: upper, upper middle, lower middle, upper lower, and lower social status.

The dependent variables were the scores of attitude toward reading and attitude toward reading-related concepts. Data analysis included t-tests, analysis of variance, and coefficients of correlation.

Measurement Instruments

Attitude toward reading was measured by the Estes Reading Attitude Scale which consists of twenty items related to reading and gives a five point scale. The Diehl Reading Attitude Scale, a semantic differential, was used to ascertain attitude toward 25 reading-related concepts. Reading achievement was assessed by the total reading subtest score of the Metropolitan Achievement Test. Social status was determined by the Two Factor Index of Social Position which utilizes occupation of the head of the household and amount of formal schooling completed by the head of the household to ascertain social status.

The Sample

The sample for this investigation was composed of 260 fourth and sixth grade students from three elementary schools in a large mid-southern urban school district. At the school designated as School A there were 50 fourth grade and 25 sixth grade students. At School B there were 39 fourth grade and 35 sixth grade students. There were 53 fourth grade and 58 sixth grade students at School C. Fifteen classrooms, involving 260 students, were selected on a random basis. The classroom sample contained a minimum of two fourth grade and two sixth grade classrooms from each participating school.

The subjects can be characterized as: (1) suburban upper and middle class composite, (2) inner city, and (3) suburban middle and lower class compositve.

Inasmuch as race was a variable in the study, the schools were selected with varied racial balances. School A had a predominately white student population. School B was composed of a predominately black student population, while School C consisted of a nearly equal ratio of black and white students. The sample included 125 boys and 135 girls.

Procedure

The two measures of attitude were administered the same day. Directions and items on the Estes Reading Attitude Scale were printed on the attitude measurement booklet and also read aloud by the examiner. Directions for the Diehl Reading Attitude Scale were printed and also read aloud. Then students worked individually through the semantic differential.

The achievement tests were administered by the classroom teacher approximately two weeks prior to the attitude scales. Parents of the students provided information used to assess social status. The tctal reading grade equivalent score from the Metropolitan Achievement Test and the race of each student were obtained by the investigator from the school district.

Results

Girls had a significantly more favorable attitude toward reading than boys ($F = 6.6$, $p > .05$). The girls also had a significantly more favorable attitude toward reading-related concepts than boys ($F = 8.9$, $p > .05$).

A significant difference ($F = 32.3$, $p > .05$) was found to exist among three reading achievement groups for attitude toward reading. The mean attitude score of the above grade placement students was significantly more positive than the mean attitude score for both the below and at grade placement students. The mean attitude score of the at grade placement students was significantly more positive than the mean attitude score for the below grade placement students.

A significant difference ($F = 4.87$, $p < .05$) was found to exist among the three reading achievement groups for attitude toward reading-related concepts. The mean attitude score for students reading above grade placement was significantly more positive than the mean attitude score for students reading below grade placement. No other comparisons were found to be significant. No significant interaction between sex and reading achievement was found for attitude toward reading or for attitude toward reading-related concepts.

No significant difference existed in attitude toward reading or attitude toward reading-related concepts between grade four and grade six students.

A significant difference ($F = 8.75$, $p < .05$) was found to exist for attitude toward reading in relation to social status. The mean attitude score for the lower social status students was significantly less positive than the mean attitude scores for the upper, upper middle, and lower middle social status students. The mean attitude score for the upper lower social status students was significantly less positive than the mean attitude scores for the upper and middle social status students. No significant differences in attitude toward reading-related concepts were found as a function of social status.

A significant difference ($F = 1.20$, $p < .05$) was found to exist for attitude toward reading between black and white students. White students had a significantly more favorable attitude toward reading than black students. No significant difference was found between black and white students for attitude toward reading-related concepts. No significant interaction was found between race and social status for attitude toward reading or for attitude toward reading-related concepts.

A positive attitude was found to exist toward all 25 of the reading-related concepts. The four concepts which received the most favorable ratings were reading to myself, comic books, going to the library, and reading during a free reading period. Students expressed a positive attitude toward reading games and paperback books. Unfavorable concepts were reading workbooks, school reading textbooks, mimeographed reading materials, reading aloud in a group, and writing about what I read.

Discussion

Replications of this study would be helpful since the variables of reading achievement, sex, grade level, and social status were combined with two measures of attitude. Elementary teachers would find the instruments used in this study simple to administer. Teachers at all levels should be more concerned about developing positive attitude toward reading. To promote positive attitude toward reading more use should be made of reading games, paperback books, and magazines along with a corresponding decrease in the use of reading workbooks and mimeographed reading materials. Student attitude toward reading may affect reading achievement and the likelihood that the student reads voluntarily for information and pleasure.

Further implications for classroom teachers include the finding that girls had a significantly more favorable attitude toward both reading and reading-related concepts than boys. Educators need to be aware of this and strive to improve boys' attitude toward reading. Students whose reading achievement was above grade placement had a significantly more positive mean attitude toward reading score than did students whose reading achievement was below or at grade level. Inasmuch as humans like to do what they do well, teachers should help students find interesting material they can read successfully.

The home environment can influence attitude toward reading as evidenced by the finding that the mean attitude score for the lower social status students was significantly less positive than the mean attitude scores for students in all the other social status levels. White students favored reading more than did black students. However, there was no significant interaction found between race and social status on either measure of reading attitude.

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